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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

VOLUME XII  
NUMBER 5

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MAY, 1904

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WHOLE  
NUMBER 115

## THE NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH.

THE fourth annual meeting of the New England Association of Teachers of English was held in Room 23, Walker Building, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, Mass., on Saturday, March 19, 1904, Dr. D. O. S. Lowell presiding.

The secretary reported 230 active members. The officers elected for next year are: president, D. O. S. Lowell, of Roxbury Latin School; vice-president, Charles L. Hanson, of Mechanics' Arts High School, Boston; secretary-treasurer, George H. Browne, of the Browne and Nichols School, Cambridge; executive committee, Mr. John G. Hart, Harvard University; Miss Sybil B. Aldrich, Girls' Latin School, Boston; Miss Alice D. Mumford, English High School, Providence, R. I.; Mr. Henry G. Pearson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The first paper read was that of Professor Mensel, of Smith College, the subject being: "The Affiliated School in Theory and Practice." It is published in full on pp. 349-60.

The next subject was the report upon various phases of the college-entrance requirements in English.

Mr. John G. Hart, of the department of English of Harvard University, was present in response to an invitation to explain the purpose of the Examination in English in that university. He spoke as follows:

I am afraid that I have the ungrateful task of telling an oft-told tale. I will try to make it as brief as a composition on a college examination book.

I can speak, of course, of the purpose of the examination in English only at Harvard. We have there two admission examinations in English: one that we look upon with some parental fondness, and another that we look upon somewhat as a stepchild. I am sorry that, as I understand this meeting, your interest is principally in the stepchild.

I refer, of course, to the examination based upon the list of books prescribed by the Commission of Colleges in New England, sometimes known, I believe, as the uniform college requirements in English. For fear that some may have thought we regard that examination with complacency and satisfaction, I should like to say, first, that we look upon it rather as an evil for the time being necessary. We have tried to get rid of it, we have tried to change it, and we are trying to get rid of it now. We use it only because giving it up would add to the confusion that already unfortunately exists in college-entrance requirements. To give it up would make the problem of the schools harder than it is now. Our objection to it is, I think, chiefly this, that it creates an artificial distinction between boys and girls who are going to college and those who are not, and subjects them to a preparation—at least it seems to from our point of view—rather for an examination than in the subject. To my mind this objection is enough to put the college-entrance requirements into the limbo of things that have been tried and found wanting. To meet this objection, the department of English several years ago planned a system of training in English which, in its judgment, is fitted for boys whether they are going to college or not, and we should be very glad to see this supplant the other requirements. We are doing all that we can to bring about that result.

But I was asked particularly to say how we intend to use, or how we do use, the examination that we do not look upon with feelings of satisfaction unmixed with impatience at what we consider its defects. The purpose of the examination in elementary English in Harvard is the same as that of all the other Harvard examinations—to test a boy's ability, rather than his knowledge of the facts in any particular set of books. We wish to use the examination as a test of the boy's ability to express himself in written English. The examination is divided, as you know, into two parts: one made up of topics drawn from a certain list of books to be read merely, and another made up of questions on the subject-matter, literary form, and logical structure—I believe I am quoting the catalogue language—of another set of books, prescribed for careful study.

In the first part of the examination we simply set a list of topics. We use topics rather than questions because we wish to give the boys the utmost possible freedom in writing. We look not so much for a knowledge of the books from which topics are drawn as for the boy's ability to express what he has to say about them. We look to see that he has a knowledge, first of all, of spelling, of punctuation, of what a sentence is, and of what a paragraph is. If he does not know any one of those four things, he is conditioned

forthwith. We look, further than that, to see that he has some skill in forming his sentences and his paragraphs ; we do not expect very much. And we look to see that he has some skill in organizing or composing what he has to say ; we do not expect much there, and we get even less. But if he shows a knowledge of grammar, and some little skill in presenting what he has to say, the boy, from our point of view, has proved his fitness for admission.

In the second part of the examination we are obliged to ask questions on the subject-matter. I suppose those of you who are familiar with the Harvard examinations have already noticed that we confine our questions almost wholly to the subject-matter of the books, with an occasional question on logical structure. We have not found out what the Commission of the Colleges in New England means by "literary form." I suppose Mr. Bowles later will bring up awful examples of what we have done in our intervals of lunacy, but our intention has been to put questions that will give a boy a chance to show that he has understood the books as the expression of human beings.

The purpose of both parts of the Harvard examination will not be served by drilling a boy on the books as if they were scientific treatises, containing useful facts to be learned ; it will be served best by training the boy in the expression of what *he* has to say, and by using the books only as examples of what some other human being has thought and felt and expressed well. To drill a boy on compositions based on the subject-matter of somebody else is not, to my mind, a way of fulfilling the purpose of the Harvard examination in English. Its purpose is, first and last, to test the boy's ability to say what *he* has thought and felt, and not to test his knowledge of the facts contained in the list of prescribed books.

This was followed by Miss Jordan's paper on "Facts and Fictions," published in full on pp. 361-64.

Mr. Ralph N. Bowles, of Phillips Exeter Academy, then gave a summary of the replies to the questions submitted to the teachers :

#### AN INVESTIGATION INTO ENGLISH REQUIREMENTS.

Early in February the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements sent out to 235 representative secondary schools, including public high schools, endowed academies, boarding and private schools, a circular and the following questions :

1. In general, do you approve the plan of conducting the English examinations for admission to college ?
2. Does the division of the requirements into (1) books for reading and (2) books for study commend itself to you ?
3. Is the proportion of books in each division a good one ?
4. In general, are you pleased with the questions asked under (1) books for reading ? under (2) books for study ?

5. What proportion of such questions should call for the reproduction of subject-matter? What proportion for opinions? What proportion, if any, for information on the life of the author? On the history of English literature?

6. What books should you omit from the requirements of 1904-8?

7. What should you substitute for those you would omit?

8. What books, if any, should you add to the present list?

9. Have you found the "certified exercise-book" valuable?

10. What suggestions have you for improving the examination system?

11. What reasons have you for abolishing it?

12. Please write definitely of your grievances. For example, you might call attention to some unsatisfactory questions you have noticed on examination papers, and point out why they are unsatisfactory. Kindly send in any questions which seem likely to lessen or to kill the human interest of the books.

The schools to which this was sent were mostly east of the Mississippi and north of Virginia and the Ohio River. A few, however, were sent beyond those limits. Replies came in from more than one hundred schools, and to the courtesy of the busy teachers who found time to respond the committee is indebted for the substance of the present report. These replies naturally show amusing differences of opinion. One happy teacher ignored all the questions, and informed us that he found the teaching of the college requirements so fascinating, and the books themselves so inspiring, that he had had no time to think of complaining. Another teacher, quite as happy perhaps, declared that he felt toward the whole business of college requirements as Emerson did toward the Eucharist—it did not interest him. He added that his consciousness was destitute of requirement tentacles. Fortunately for the committee, most of the teachers appear to hold less radical views. They have taken the questions in good faith, and have made thoughtful and helpful replies.

Concerning Question 1 (definite approval or disapproval of the general plan of the examinations) about three-fourths of the teachers answer Yes. A few answer No, and a few reply doubtfully, as, "in many respects," "not altogether," and "a necessary but great evil."

In case of Question 2 (the division of the requirements) about the same proportions hold good. Most of the teachers are heartily in favor of the present division. One, however, says that the books for study are too difficult; another, that the division is unimportant.

In reply to Question 3 (proportion of books) there is considerable diversity of opinion. About two-thirds answer Yes. Two say there are too many books in *both* divisions; five, that there are *not enough* books for reading; two, that there are *too* many books for reading. Three say that there are *too many* books for study; and two, that there are *not enough* books for study. One says that the division is not adhered to by the examiners, and proposes that a list for study be prescribed by the college, and a list for reading, adapted to the needs of its students, be prepared by each school.

In the case of Question 4 (questions on books), about half the replies are

Yes, a good many answer positively No, and quite a number doubtfully. The questions set by the College-Entrance Examination Board are especially criticised. One teacher says they are "not sufficiently simple and direct, and tend too much to subtle character analysis and literary criticism;" another says "they are too full of detail, requiring mere memory exercise;" and still another, that "they are too exacting in unimportant details."

In the case of Question 5 the general opinion is that a very large proportion of the questions should call for the reproduction of subject-matter. One teacher, however, says that only 25 per cent. should call for reproduction, and 75 per cent. for opinions; and another, that only one-eighth of the questions should require reproduction, and five-eighths should call for opinions. Another says that "ready-made opinions are cheap and can be easily furnished." Another scores the committee by saying that he has submitted the question to four intelligent men, and no two agree as to what the question means. There is a pretty general opinion that there should be few questions, if any, on the life of the authors and on the history of English literature.

In the case of Question 6 the only books now on the requirement list not attacked are *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *The Ancient Mariner*. The *Essay on Burns* and *The Princess* are the most severely condemned. Each has 18 votes against it. Milton's *Minor Poems* and the *Essay on Addison* are a close second, with 17. Then comes *The Vicar of Wakefield*, with 16; followed by the *Essay on Milton*, with 14; Burke's *Speech on Conciliation*, with 10; the *Essay on Johnson*, with 9; the *Life of Goldsmith*, with 8; *The Lady of the Lake*, with 7; Tennyson's *Selected Idylls*, with 4; *Sir Launfal* and the *Coverley Papers*, each with 3; *Macbeth*, *Ivanhoe*, and *Silas Marner*, each with 2. One teacher says that after an experience of ten years he is willing to substitute any one of the Rollo books; another says sweepingly that he would omit "about half of them;" another, that the "books are profitable, but not always interesting." On the other hand, one says "they are all good;" then he qualifies his assertion by adding: "The only absolutely impossible book this year is Carlyle's *Essay on Burns*." One or two others express contentment with the present list.

The replies to Question 7 (books substituted) are almost too numerous to mention. *Paradise Lost*, as a substitute for the *Minor Poems*, gets more votes—9; Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* is next, with 7; Burns's poems, in most cases in substitution of the *Essay on Burns*, has 6 votes. Four suggest some speech of Webster instead of Burke's *Speech on Conciliation*. Four suggest the *Essay on Warren Hastings*, instead of the essays on Milton, Addison, and Johnson, and three suggest the *Essay on Clive*. Four suggest more American authors, and specify Cooper, Irving, Hawthorne, Whittier, and Longfellow. Four advise more Emerson, and one specifies his *American Scholar*. Four wish Wordsworth to be represented; several suggest Stevenson and specify *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Pueris Virginibusque*. Some wish more Addison; others, more Scott. Of Scott, *Kenilworth*.

and *The Talisman* are mentioned. One suggests a play of Goldsmith; another, a play of Sheridan. Several wish to see Kipling represented, and one mentions *Captains Courageous*. Several wish more of Lowell; one suggests his *Commemoration Ode*; another, one of his essays. Several suggest *Hamlet*; several, *As You Like It*; and one has the temerity to propose *Pilgrim's Progress*. Other works suggested are: Bacon's *Essays*; Pope's *Iliad*; Swift's *Voyage to Lilliput*; Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*; Gray's *Elegy*; Lamb's *Essays*; selections from Keats, Shelley, Byron, Browning, Arnold, Pater, Tennyson, Ruskin, Poe, Kingsley, Irving, Longfellow, Motley, and Parkman; Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*; Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*; Thackeray's *Roundabout Papers*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Henry Esmond*; Eliot's *Romola*. Under this question one teacher makes the appalling suggestion that "the objective point should be development of types and the work properly co-ordinated with history of Greece and Rome as well as England and America."

In regard to Question 8 the general opinion is that the list, as it at present stands, is long enough, and that, if new books are added, others should be removed. Many, however, suggest books to be added, but it is not always clear whether they propose them as substitutions or not. One suggests some book of travel, if any of literary value can be found; another, something humorous, a burlesque perhaps; still another, "something humorous and imaginative, such as *Alice in Wonderland*;" another, something introducing classic myths, a translation of a classic from the German, Latin, or Greek. This mention of classic myths reminds me that the other day, in an examination on Milton's *Minor Poems*, I asked who Hymen was. One boy replied: "Hymen was a king, and had lions called Hymenian lions, which were very ugly and fierce." Two suggest some history of English literature; and one, a history of American literature, with a personal acquaintance with the chief writers. One proposes that some of the best American short stories be read; another, a volume of extracts from numerous authors. One says her pupils demand books of action. Several ask for more Shakespeare; one, for more Macaulay; several, for the addition of Emerson; and among specific works mentioned are: the book of Job; Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*; *Pilgrim's Progress*; *Robinson Crusoe*; Pope's *Iliad*; Franklin's *Autobiography*; Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*; Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*; Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* and *David Copperfield*; Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of Seven Gables*, and *Tales of a Wayside Inn*; Lowell's *Commemoration Ode* and *Essay on Lincoln*; Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*; Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*; Kipling's *Jungle Book*; Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, *David Balfour*, and *Treasure Island*; Watson's *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush*; Green's *Short History of the English People*.

In the case of Question 9 (certified notebook), forty-seven either have not used it or do not consider it worth trying. Twenty-six do not answer the question at all. Thirteen approve of it, or say they have used it successfully.

One goes so far as to say: "Yes, it is capital; it is the only concrete thing about the examination; it does allow us to secure some definite work from the student." As testimony of exactly opposite kind, another says: "Such books usually waste time on nonessentials." One teacher replies: "I do not know this book;" and another makes the rather embarrassing answer: "I have not seen it. Will you please to forward it to me?"

In the case of Question 10 (suggestions for improvement), thirty-one either do not answer, or say they have no suggestions. One says: "Oh, reform it altogether;" another, "Drop it entirely—the only possible thing to do with it from the school point of view. The effect of the English requirement has been thoroughly bad upon the school." Another teacher says: "The more I study the list of questions given, the better I am satisfied with them." Several say that there should be subjects for composition not based on books read, especially since during the freshman year most of the student's work is thus based on experience; and several suggest that the number of required books be decreased so as to allow more time for general theme-writing. Several complain that the pupils do not write as good themes on books as on general subjects, and that the amount of theme-writing on books necessitated by the present long list tends to take all the interest out of the theme-work in the schools. Another complains that the present arrangement compels the teacher to make the work of preparation too formal, and so makes it difficult to inculcate in the pupils a taste for literature and the habit of reading. Another teacher says that the books should be more human, and that the pupils should be taught to read more for enjoyment than for study. There is a pretty general opinion that the examination questions should not be too minute; that they should not call for a display of erudition merely; that all philosophical questions and all questions involving ethical comparison of character should be omitted; and that they should be simple, direct, and easily within the limited comprehension of the average boy and girl. Then there are various other suggestions that deserve mention. One recommends that more time be allowed for the English examination. Several say that the questions should not be limited to two or three books; several, that no distinction should be made between books for reading and books for study. One or two suggest that the list of books be changed oftener; and others complain that it is changed too often. One teacher suggests the addition of spelling and of some test of oral English; and another, of a requirement in English grammar. One advocates replacing the present system by a series of certified exercise books, showing the work done by the pupil on a list of books chosen by the instructor with a view to interesting his own particular classes. In this way the particular aptitudes and tastes of the student could be reached. One teacher suggests that the examination books be read in a more leisurely fashion, that more men be employed to read them, and that the men be experienced in such work. Another urges that the college employ as readers men



who have been out of college more than a year or two. One teacher has replied so fully that I shall quote his answer :

I should assign as required reading (*a*) certain plays of Shakespeare; (*b*) the *Minor Poems* of Milton and the first two books of *Paradise Lost*; and (*c*) the representative books of any definite period in English literature. The requirements under (*c*) might be changed at intervals, as at present the list of required reading is occasionally changed.

If the period selected for careful study under (*c*) were the early eighteenth century, the authors studied would naturally be Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe*), Steele and Addison (*Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, and preferably other essays in addition, such, for instance, as those included in the "Golden Treasury" edition of Steele, and in the same edition of Addison), Pope (*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, and selections at the discretion of the teacher), and Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*). Goldsmith, though of later date, might well be added to this list, as the transition from the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers* to *The Vicar of Wakefield* is an easy one to make, and a comparison between the poetry of Pope and the poetry of Goldsmith is not uninteresting. I should add, also, Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* and Macaulay's *Essay on Addison*. The latter, however, I should not overemphasize by making it a book for so-called "study and practice."

If the period selected were the early nineteenth century, I should choose a group of authors: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Scott — men who lived at the same time and knew one another, and whose works have points of likeness which together make the characteristics of the early nineteenth century, and points of unlikeness which give the individuality of the authors.

Whatever period were assigned, I should expect that the lives of the authors selected and the literary history of the period should be studied. My object, however, would be to bring out the human interests in literature, which is most strongly seen when the author is known in his environment, among his contemporaries, as an individual human being.

For examination purposes I should assign certain books which must be read, and on the reproduction of the subject-matter in these books, on opinions concerning them, and on the lives of their authors I should base the larger number of the examination questions. The background which comes from supplementary reading would be evidenced in the answers to these questions; but, if it were considered desirable, a few general questions might be included for the special purpose of bringing out the knowledge acquired by the supplementary reading.

Instead of asking detailed questions which require detailed answers, I should assign subjects for themes, and require that three or four short themes be written on three or four subjects selected from a list of from eight to twelve. This gives the candidate an opportunity to show what knowledge of the books he possesses, what appreciation of literature he has acquired, and what power he has to express his thoughts or his knowledge in written words. And these three things are what, in my opinion, should be tested by an examination.

I should not be averse to dividing the examination into two parts. The first would then be what I have already described; the second would consist of questions based on the careful study of (*a*) any two or three of Shakespeare's plays, and (*b*) Milton's *Minor Poems*. Some intensive study is desirable, but these, and these only, seem to me to repay the pupils in the preparatory schools for such study.

The suggestions which I make are based on my experience in teaching at the same

time classes which were limited in their work by the college requirements in English, and other classes which were not preparing for college, but were reading English literature as it grouped itself according to centuries or parts of centuries. In every case I have found the non-college class eager, enthusiastic, thoroughly interested. The college preparatory classes, on the other hand, have always worked mechanically. Their English, in spite of my best endeavors, has tended to become task-work and has dragged. They get very little out of their work, and yet they spend much time on it. In comparison with the non-college classes, they get nothing.

I have found, in the course of my teaching, that pupils like to have some connection in their work. They like to have a link to join the book they are about to read with the book they have just finished reading, and they very decidedly object to skipping about from an American author to an English one, or from an eighteenth-century author to a nineteenth-century one, or from poetry to political speeches. The impetus which they have gathered in the study of one book is somehow lost in this process of skipping to another.

I have found also that pupils of the age of those preparing for college get more good from the reading of a large number of books than from the intensive study of Shakespeare and Milton. Their attention, if fixed too long on any one book, wearies. They come to dislike the book.

In connection with this, I feel very strongly that English should not be made a vehicle for instruction in geography, history, botany, foreign languages, and literature, and, in general, all varieties of encyclopædic knowledge. If the emphasis is thrown on such superficial matters (as it must be, if a pupil is to answer 3 (*a*) under English B of the paper set by the College-Entrance Examination Board, June, 1903), the real value of the book from the point of view of English literature will necessarily be, to say the least, obscured. My own opinion is that it will be totally destroyed.

In addition to a liking for a connection in their work, and a liking for the intelligent reading of many books instead of the study of a few books, I have found also among my pupils a liking for human interest as opposed to mere literary interest. They are not ready, in the years before they enter college, for advanced literary criticism, and it should not be required of them. To understand and to appreciate good books is what they need to be taught and what they are usually willing to be taught. They are not, however, interested in the relation which the *Songs* bear to the development of the idea of *The Princess* (see II, 3, English A, College-Entrance Examination Board, June, 1903), and they reject such knowledge with surprising unanimity and completeness.

All these characteristics which I have observed in pupils seem to me to be disregarded by the present requirements of the college-entrance examination, and particularly by the questions set by the College-Entrance Examination Board. The plan which I suggest is, on the other hand, adapted to the liking of the pupils, and obviates many of the difficulties of the present system, without losing any of its advantages.

In regard to Question 11, most of those who answered this question gave no reason for abolishing the present system. A few, however, objected to it strongly, and urge that the whole system go by the board. One alleges its general absurdity; another calls it illogical and inadequate. One says it is not a fair test of the students' powers, and suggests the certificate method instead. Another complains that it takes life out of the books and makes the

work of preparation too much of a "dead grind." One says: "As a course in the study of language it is weak; and as a course in literature it is disconnected; and, while giving little knowledge of the subjects, tends to cultivate a distaste rather than appetite for it." Another says that expert teachers are needed for it, and they are not to be had; that the burden of English has been thrown almost wholly on the teachers of English requirements; that the taste for good literature can be awakened, *not* taught; and that the use of good English comes only by the compulsory use of it in all school work.

In regard to Question 12 by far the greater number of teachers say they have no grievances. Those who do complain speak of the tendency to emphasize trivial matters on the examination papers. Some object to the distinction between books for study and for reading. Others complain that the examinations are made out too carelessly. One says:

I think that the board examination in English A is too hard, and too far advanced. It calls for too great a knowledge of the history of the time that each book represents, and too great critical faculty on the part of the young student. The examination seems to me to be better fitted for a college senior than for a high-school boy. The latter is not mature enough to answer such questions as the board asks.

Another says:

The present system forces on both teachers and pupils too exhaustive a study of a limited number of books. The tendency is to seek to anticipate every possible point of view which may occur to the examiner. In the books assigned for reading it becomes necessary to know (*a*) the story, even to the least important incident, for even those may prove necessary for "illustrations;" (*b*) every character; (*c*) every possible grouping of the background or setting of the story, both the historical background, as in the case of feudalism in *Ivanhoe*, and the literal background, as in the case of the description of Cedric's hall; (*d*) every possible point of view for the literary criticism of each book, both in itself and in relation to all other literature; (*e*) every possible point of contact with actual history; (*f*) every incident that has to do with the production of each book; and (*g*) the life-value, or moral interpretation. All these things have been called for by the questions on recent examination papers. It is evident that when ten books have been studied so carefully as to enable a student to answer all such questions on all ten books, there is very little interest in literature left.

Nevertheless, there are five other books to be prepared by careful study. The pupils must know as much about them as about the books for reading, and in addition must have an ability to place quotations, a knowledge of all allusions made in the text, a knowledge of the structure of each book, a knowledge of meter, and a knowledge of "the leading facts in those periods of English literary history to which the prescribed books belong.

Finally the College Entrance Examination Board has added the essentials of English grammar. What they consider essential is best seen by looking at 1 (*b*) of English B, of the paper set in June, 1903. The sentence there given is one which would not be accepted from a school child of today, and even includes an absolute construction which is essentially non-English. Yet this is the sentence that is given for grammatical analysis. The most obvious intention of it is to catch the candidate napping.

One of the things asked for by the committee was unsatisfactory examination papers. In reply to this request many such papers were submitted. These I should be very glad to read in case anyone cares to hear them. One teacher complains that college examiners sometimes seem to make out papers as he once made out a paper in the days of his early teaching. He had to set an examination in geography, and, as he knew nothing of the rivers of Mexico, it occurred to him that it might be a good idea to ask the pupils to name them. He accordingly did so. Only one boy answered the question at all, and he said: "The only river I know in Mexico is Popocatpetl, and that's a mountain."

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RALPH N. BOWLES.

Mr. Charles L. Hanson then read the recommendations of the committee:

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS IN ENGLISH.

While some of us are insisting that English is not examinable, while many of us are looking forward for relief to some system of affiliated schools, for most of us the plain facts remain that the examination mills keep up their annual grinding and that we must furnish the grist. Apparently, then, your committee can best minister to your immediate wants by suggesting some ways in which these examinations may better serve their purpose.

Before considering English examinations in general, let us note one or two attempts to give the schools considerable freedom. Those teachers who believe in examinations in English could hardly ask for anything more than to have their pupils examined on the work done in a course of study which is adapted to the special needs of each school. Precisely this opportunity is offered by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I read from the catalogue:

*As an alternative in English* there may be offered any systematic course in combined rhetoric and literature which in amount is practically equivalent to the requirement specified. Such an alternative, however, will be accepted only upon special application in each case not less than two weeks prior to the examination.<sup>1</sup>

On the surface, it does not seem feasible for an institution like Harvard University to adopt a precisely similar plan. By way of showing her good

<sup>1</sup> We know of one school which has taken advantage of this offer for several years. Although the list which that school sends the institute each year does not vary much from the "required" list, the plan allows the teacher to read some of the least examinable books on the required list without any thought of the examination. The very fact, too, that he can omit Milton's minor poems, substitute Macaulay's lives of *Johnson* and *Goldsmith* for his essay on *Milton*, and some of Webster's speeches for Macaulay's essay on *Addison*, puts his work on a different basis. Every year he feels indebted to the Institute of Technology for the freedom this plan gives.

intentions, however, Harvard has taken a step toward giving each teacher the privilege of using in his teaching the literature he has found valuable. In the plan of admission known as "English (*b*)" the list of books is longer than in the old plan, "English (*a*)," and there are some, although perhaps too few, options. The practical objections to "English (*b*)" are, first, that most schools feel too poor to buy the considerable number of books it requires; and, second, that schools which send pupils to several colleges cannot form a separate section for those who are preparing for Harvard.

Without dwelling on other efforts to put the examination system on a better basis, let us look at it as it stands today. First, what are the results of the present system; or, if that is not a fair question, what results does the system reveal? Your committee has not collected many statistics touching this matter, but the very fact that last year, in the opinion of the Harvard examiners, 28 per cent. of the applicants were "illiterate," that their work was "seriously deficient in punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and the use of paragraphs," shows that we cannot afford to rest on the assurance that we have at least made great improvement during the last ten or fifteen years. At the other end of the line, many teachers who cannot complain that their pupils are rejected lose courage because it rarely happens that the best pupils do work which the examiner recognizes as conspicuously good. Under the circumstances, it seems to your committee that the best way to secure better results is to ask the examiners and the teachers to consider carefully (1) the effects of the examination system on the teachers, and (2) the purpose of the examination.

1. *The effects of the examination system on the teachers.*—Some teachers pay little attention to the examinations. The books read for college are mere drops in the bucketfuls of English undefiled which they dip from the wells of Chaucer and the rest. They do not need our help. We congratulate them heartily, but for our present purpose we must set them aside. We are thinking rather of those schools which can barely find time to read the college requirements, or which feel compelled to rush through them all in a single year; or, again, of those teachers who, after reading a book with their classes as they think it should be read, are obliged to teach it with reference to what the examiner may expect, and perhaps to review the same book a year or two later. In such schools, your committee is convinced, the tendency of the examinations is to misdirect the teaching, and to kill interest in the books. Perhaps it is true that the more conscientious the teacher, the more liable she is to teach the book to death. Many of us think that in our struggle against this tendency we are frequently, perhaps almost always, successful. Others of us cannot help feeling that we are put to needless toil because the examiners have not realized the tremendous influence which the phrasing of their questions has on our teaching, and because we have not quite understood what the examiners want. Statements of what the college wants are

valuable only when supported by questions which are clearly in keeping with such statements.

This leads us to our first recommendation: that the colleges send out explicit statements of what they expect of the applicants, and that they set questions which are clearly in keeping with these statements.

2. *The purpose of the examination.*—If we ask the college catalogues, or the men behind the catalogues, what the purpose of the examination is, the prompt answer comes: "To test the candidate's ability to write English." Incidentally, the candidate should show some knowledge of literature, and now and then it is hoped that he may give signs of some appreciation of literature. Let us pause over this threefold purpose of the examination. If, as probably all concerned would agree, the main object is to test ability to write English, it should go without saying that papers in other subjects should give evidence of such ability. To be sure, some efforts have been made toward recognizing this fact, but the number of cases in which the examiner of an English paper changes his estimate of a pupil's proficiency in composition as a result of reading the pupil's papers in other subjects is so small that it attracts little attention and has little weight. As a step toward securing this object, the English work might be influenced by unusual ability or marked impropriety in the use of English in examinations in other subjects. When that day comes on which all departments of the college shall demand good English, and when all secondary teachers shall make it their business to attend to the pupil's English while teaching him physics and algebra, the main object of the examination in English will be secured without giving any such examination. Meanwhile an undue burden will rest on the shoulders of the English teacher.

The second purpose of the examination—the test of knowledge of literature—may with perhaps more accuracy be considered the means to an end rather than an end in itself—the means whereby a pupil may show his ability to write English. Faithful teachers are under no less compulsion, however, to teach the literature thoroughly. Now, it is a perplexing problem to teach all the books prescribed for reading with a thoroughness that will warrant every pupil's writing readily and well on such a subject as "The Death of Reed—that—bends," a question from an examination paper, and a question which neither teachers nor examiners should be expected to handle. Pupils read *The Last of the Mohicans*, say, in the entering year of the high school. They should never read it again in connection with school; but if they are to be asked such questions as that—or, in fact, such questions as the majority of those which are based on books to be *read* merely—a review is necessary in preparation for an examination taken two or three years later. As one teacher writes: "Pupils can't keep in their minds much that is definite from the books earliest read." Not only is it desirable, on general principles, to read in the first year of the course all the books, like *Ivanhoe*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, which are adapted to the less

mature pupils, but so many of the requirements are too difficult to be understood and appreciated till the last year that it is desirable, for this particular reason, to read the easier works earlier in the course. Pupils of high-school age develop rapidly. One year Shakespeare is "foolish;" the next year he is "great," with all the emphasis an enthusiastic youth can put into that expressive word. Every school should take advantage of this rapid development of the pupil and arrange its course of reading accordingly. The question ought not to be, as one teacher put it for a good many of us: "Shall I teach literature or prepare the class for the impending examination?" And perhaps this question would not recur so often if the colleges were not quite so eager to catch the lazy boy. As an immediate means of alleviating this condition of affairs your committee would make its second recommendation: that the examiners give less attention to catching the lazy boy; that in testing the pupil's knowledge of literature they do not confine their questions to two or three books out of sixteen.

Down in our hearts we all agree that the highest end for which we are working is that our boys and girls shall appreciate literature. Yet, while we are doing our best, it frequently happens that "what a teacher calls a good book is associated with drudgery." Our next query is whether the examination is to any extent responsible for this unfortunate result. One feature of the requirement, evidently intended to lead to a proper appreciation of literature, is the division of books into two sets, the first for reading and the second for study. Is it not possible that this very division defeats its own object? If a teacher is worthy of any freedom, is not this a good place to begin to exercise freedom? Should it not be for the teachers to decide whether their pupils shall "study" *Julius Cæsar* or *Macbeth*, or both? Having found for ten years that my pupils thrive better on a careful study of Macaulay's life of *Johnson* than they do on a similar study of his essay on *Addison*, or his *Milton*, why may I not choose which of the two or three required works my pupils shall "study"? Just because some of you can lead your pupils through Milton's minor poems line by line and syllable by syllable, it does not follow that, with all my love for those very poems, I can induce my boys to like them. Why not allow me to substitute two books of *Paradise Lost*, and let you continue with your more mature, or more appreciative, or better-taught pupils? Your committee comes then to its third recommendation: That the division of the requirements into (1) books for reading and (2) books for study be abolished; or, if this change seems too radical, that the teacher be allowed options among the books prescribed for study; and that the examiners give immediate relief by allowing the pupil options. If the applicant has a genuine interest in *Macbeth* and fails to appreciate Milton's minor poems, let him choose between them. If he prefers Macaulay's *Johnson* to his *Milton*, why should he not be encouraged to write on the *Johnson*? Possibly this granting of options may be the means of altering the report from the colleges that composition is forced and unnatural, that

the pupil says, in the words of one of them, "what I thought the teacher wanted me to say."

Now we come to the books which serve as the basis of the examination. For the most part they are good. The replies to our questions suggest that it might be well to give teachers a few options among them. One way of doing this would be to arrange twenty-four books in eight groups of three, on the understanding that every school should teach two books in each of the eight groups. It is a fair question, however, whether in general the difficulty really is with the books. Is it not, rather, with the way in which the books are treated? For instance, there would be much more point in prescribing Carlyle's *Essay on Burns* if that requirement accompanied several of Burns's poems. Teachers must be free to use a book in such a way that they will do neither the author nor the pupil rank injustice. Burns has a right to expect boys and girls to like him. The purpose of the essay is not so much to introduce the boys and girls to Carlyle as it is to help them form a just estimate of Robert Burns. Again, what is the use of trying to turn *The Vicar of Wakefield* into a text-book? If we allow our pupils to read the book through by themselves, and if after that we join with them in laughing at the absurdities of the plot and all the other absurdities, why should we not be content if they enjoy little but three or four of the character sketches? We shall be content to treat both book and pupil in this rational way just as soon as the questions warrant our doing so, just as soon as this persistent clamor for reproduction—or this supposed clamor for reproduction—gives way to opportunities for the youth to tell frankly what he has come to think or feel about such books as *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Macaulay's *Essays* and Burke's famous speech. Then, instead of questions involving display of erudition, we shall have simple, unassuming questions of human interest. The applicant should be able to answer all such questions; the test should be *how well* he answers them. Then he might reasonably hope to show the examiner some degree of proficiency in sentence structure and the construction of paragraphs. It is possible, too, that occasionally a pupil might put enough of himself into the writing to make it "notably good."

It is desirable that the examiners should get the high-school point of view. They must not expect too great maturity of thought. If you are an examiner, why should you not question the applicant much as you talk to a young person about a book you know of his reading? If you expect him to reply with interest and enthusiasm to your queries about *Eben Holden* or *The Call of the Wild*, you do not limit him largely to a reproduction of what he has read. You are much more likely to ask some such questions as these: "Is Eben Holden a man you would like to know?" "Why?" "Does the story of Buck remind you of the story of any other dog?" "How did you feel as you read of Buck's terrible experiences?"

Why, many of us have all but lost sight of the main purpose for which some of the books should be read. Such slaves of the examination system



are we that we need to be reminded every year that Shakespeare's plays are *plays*. Think of it! The excuse given repeatedly for not reading Shakespeare aloud is lack of time! Some of you were told recently of a teacher to whom it had not occurred to read the plays aloud, or to have them so read. Now, it is quite possible that before the colleges abolish the examination in English there is a bit of missionary work for them to do. Even if it is not practicable to test each applicant in the ideal way—to hand him a copy of *The Merchant of Venice* and hear him read—it appears that it would be desirable for the examiners to suggest in some way that the plays should be read aloud. They might use once or twice a decade some such questions as these:

How many times have you read this play aloud?

How many times have you heard this play read aloud?

How many times have you enjoyed reading this play aloud?

How many times have you enjoyed hearing it read?

Have you ever heard the following passage read so that it meant more to you than when you read it by yourself? If so, point out to what extent you are indebted to the other person's reading.

A consideration of the attitude toward Shakespeare suggests that as a substitute for the time-honored passage calling for an explanation of italicized words and an account of the circumstances under which the lines were spoken, an occasional question like the following might have a wholesome influence:

Quote from *Julius Caesar* twenty of the lines which you learned because you considered them better worth learning than other lines in the play. Can you tell just why you chose those lines?

To such radical changes the objection will be offered that due notice should be given in order that the applicants may be prepared. True, but if the questions were given as options, no one could find fault. Hence we offer our fourth recommendation: that all students be trained to read aloud, and that the examiners do all they can to encourage this form of training; and our fifth recommendation: that the examiners take pains to ask questions which will do no injustice to the pupil or to the author; questions which will, on the contrary, encourage the teacher to have the pupil study the book as the author would have him study it.

Our teaching is to a considerable extent a failure unless the required books have a wholesome influence on the voluntary reading. What a trite statement! As a means of anticipating further discussion of the subject, suppose the examiners should offer a few options. For example, after the applicant has been compelled to answer some questions on *Ivanhoe*, he might be allowed to substitute for other questions on the same book what he has to say about *Treasure Island*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, or *Quentin Durward*; or, if the question were not repeated for some years, he might be left free to write about one of his favorite novels and to tell why he liked it.

Similarly in connection with *Macbeth* there might be options on *King Lear* or *Hamlet*; and why shouldn't a student who is passing an examination on *The Merchant of Venice* have the opportunity to tell whether and why he likes it better than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, or *Twelfth Night*? On some examination paper, the pupil might be allowed to write on the two books he likes best out of ten or twelve such as *Tom Brown's School Days*, *Kenilworth*, *Rob Roy*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Marmion*, *The Sketch-Book*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tales of a Traveler*, *The House of Seven Gables*, *The Pathfinder*, and *Treasure Island*.

If the required books do not influence the outside reading, other considerations will. As Professor Bronson, of Brown University, says in a leaflet soon to be published by this association:

Many of our high-school youth are leading a double life in things literary: in the class-room, Doctor Jekyll studies the lofty idealism of *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*; outside, Mr. Hyde revels in the yellow journal and the flashy novel; and in many cases Doctor Jekyll does not even realize that he has changed into another and a lower being.

Now, experience and observation show that, whereas it is perfectly easy to have pupils who are not preparing for college read from five to twenty plays of Shakespeare by themselves while they are reading three aloud in class, it is not feasible to pay so much attention to outside reading in the case of those who are preparing for college. If the examiners should recognize in some way this seemingly intangible "outside reading," possibly they might do much toward the symmetrical development of literary youth. Our sixth recommendation, therefore, is that the examiners, at first by the use of options, give the applicant a natural opportunity to show in what ways the required books have influenced his voluntary reading; or, better, that the applicant be encouraged to tell the examiner, even if briefly and imperfectly, about his "outside reading."

Even if all these changes should be made, and if they should all have the most favorable results, the examination would still be narrow. Literature is only one of a pupil's many interests. If he is expected to use English freely and frankly, he should be allowed to write on other subjects. The college would be glad to have him do so, because such training is a direct preparation for the work which will be required of him in his freshman year. The requirement is a sensible one on general principles. It points toward the recognition of the whole pupil. And what reason is given for the fact that it is so generally shunned? Only that ugly reason of mistrust. Such miscellaneous information has not seemed examinable. "Boys would write papers on which they had been previously drilled." The final suggestion your committee has to make is that it is not only possible but practicable to set questions on various subjects outside the realm of literature. It has been the custom for several years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to have one general question on each paper. In June, 1899, the question was:

Give, in from fifteen to thirty lines, an account of your coming today to this examination.

In June, 1900, it was :

Write a theme of about one hundred words on one of the following subjects : (1) "Graduation Exercises at My School." (2) "A Street Scene in My Town."

In September, 1900, it was :

Write a theme of about two hundred words on the following subject : "My Last Day at School."

In June, 1901, it was :

Write a theme of not more than two hundred words on the following subject : "The Thing Which Most Influenced Me in My Decision to Enter Technology."

In September, 1902, it was :

Write a theme describing any five minutes of your life.

Last June it was :

Explain, in not less than two hundred words, the chief defect (or good point) of your preparation for this examination in English. Illustrate, if possible, by reference to the way you have answered the questions asked above.

The Technology professors, far from having the feeling that boys have been "drilled" on those subjects, are enthusiastic over results. The papers written last June, for example, satisfied one of the most laudable purposes of an examination. They revealed so many weaknesses that the English department saw with unusual clearness the line along which it should direct some of the work of the freshman year, and new work was laid out accordingly. Compare these stimulating results with the drudgery of reading reproductions!

With this report in mind, I asked some of my boys the other day to hand me two sets of questions: (1) questions on which they would gladly be examined personally; (2) questions which would be suitable for boys and girls in general. Let me read the questions handed in by one boy. First, as an indication of the boy's interests, those on which he would like to be examined himself:

Write two hundred words on the comparison of the songs of the thrushes.

Write one hundred words on any incident connected with bird life.

Write two hundred words on the character of birds as displayed on their nests.

(Any similar question.)

Write on "ferns as pure leaves."

Write on fern study.

Write on the fern's place in nature.

Write on any incident in connection with the finding of ferns.

Write on whatever you please in connection with mosses.

Write on whatever you please in connection with mushrooms.

Write on some geological subject you are interested in.

Write on conglomerate rock of the Boston basin.

Write an account of your finding of some mineral.

Write an account of your trip through the mountains southwest of North Conway, N. H.

Write on the view from Mount Monadnock, N. H.

Write on evidences of the glacial period about your home.

Secondly, his questions for pupils in general :

Write one hundred words about any bird, animal, or tree that you are familiar with.

Write about any scene in nature that you are fond of.

Write about some trip you have taken either through the mountains or in a sail-boat or a canoe.

Write about the view from some mountain or hill.

Write about some book which you have read outside of school.

Write about your favorite poet or author, and tell why he is your favorite.

Write on your favorite kind of musical entertainment, such as vocal or instrumental music or dancing, and tell why it is your favorite.

Write a description of some building you are acquainted with.

Write about the subject you like best in your work and tell why you like it best.

These questions are copied exactly as they stand on the boy's paper. They will serve their purpose if they suggest to some examiner a more suitable phrasing, or if they indicate that it is absolutely feasible to give "the whole boy" a chance in the examination in his mother-tongue.

In brief, our recommendations are :

1. That the colleges send out explicit statements of what they expect of the applicants, and that they set questions which are clearly in keeping with those statements.

2. That in testing the pupil's knowledge of literature the examiners do not confine their questions to two or three books out of sixteen.

3. That the division of requirements into (1) books for reading and (2) books for study be abolished ; or, at least, that the teacher be allowed options within the same types of literature represented by the books prescribed for study ; and that the examiners give immediate relief by allowing the pupil options. This recommendation is to be construed as involving no addition to the amount required.

4. That all students be trained to read aloud, and that the examiners do all they can to encourage this form of training.

5. That the examiners take pains to ask questions which will do no injustice to the pupil or to the author—questions which will, on the contrary, encourage the teacher to have the pupil study the book as the author would have him study it.

6. That the applicant be encouraged to tell the examiner about "outside reading."

7. That in this test of a pupil's ability to use his mother-tongue he be not confined to the subject of literature, but be allowed to write on other interests as well.

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## DISCUSSION.

Mr. J. Rowe Webster, private tutor, Cambridge, made an interesting contribution to the discussion, in which he said that he had on a large printed card in his school the following statement from the Harvard catalogue: "No candidate will be accepted whose work is seriously deficient in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure or division into paragraphs." This had a salutary effect upon the boys. In his experience he had found that boys had great difficulty in writing good sentences, and in writing a variety of sentences. There seemed a lack of power to form complex sentences and the development of this power was one of the first things he had to teach.

Mr. W. M. Cole, of Worcester, said that in his experience the difficulty that so many pupils find arises solely from the fact that the teachers have tried to prepare them to take a college examination which, as it happened, was marked on a different basis from that which governed the teaching in the high school.

Mr. W. T. Foster, of Cambridge, thought that too much emphasis had been placed on the books and too little on the text which Mr. Webster had placed before his pupils. Teachers would come nearer to satisfying the spirit of the entrance requirements in English if they assumed more independence in teaching what they think should be taught, and not try to cover the contents of the exact books.